



## **Atlantic Sturgeon are in Hot Water**

Atlantic sturgeon are a large fish that is found along the entire east coast in North America. They can live up to 60 years, reach up to 15 feet in length, and weigh over 800 pounds. Atlantic sturgeon spend most of their lives in the ocean, but are anadromous, meaning they migrate back to the rivers they were born in to spawn. Although Atlantic sturgeon populations were once abundant, they have been declining since the late 1800s. Some of the reasons their populations are in danger are impacts from overfishing, loss of habitat from dams and dredging, and water pollution. Scientists and researchers have been reviewing the Atlantic sturgeon's status to see if they qualify to be listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Now, the Atlantic sturgeon may be facing another potential threat. This newly recognized threat is not overfishing, dams or dredging, or water pollution; it's rising temperatures from climate change. Along with all fish, the Atlantic sturgeon may be becoming increasingly at risk due to the damaging effects of climate change and rising temperatures in rivers and oceans. When the water gets hotter, it may affect fish by impacting the amount of food available, decreasing the suitability of spawning habitat (e.g., causing the spawning habitat to not be as good for sturgeon), and lower oxygen concentrations in the water. Global warming is causing the waters to become warmer. Rainfall patterns, sea levels, and water currents are also changing.

Some fish are unable to spawn if the water temperature is too hot. If the Atlantic sturgeon are unable to spawn due to high water temperatures, their populations face another hurdle to overcome. If sturgeon are unable to reproduce due to the warmer water, it is only a matter of time until there are no Atlantic sturgeon left.

Atlantic sturgeon spawning areas also need to contain oxygen levels that are able to support young life stages of sturgeon, which are more sensitive than the larger fish. As the water temperature rises due to climate change and global warming, the oxygen levels are decreasing. Just as oxygen in the air is necessary for humans to survive, the oxygen in the water is necessary for Atlantic sturgeon to survive and grow.

Atlantic sturgeon could try to adapt to the hotter water temperatures by migrating or moving to cooler waters; however, this move could have negative outcomes as well. First, Atlantic sturgeon are programmed to home to their natal river (e.g., they return to where they were born to spawn). If they attempt to spawn in an unfamiliar area, reproducing could be unsuccessful. This new habitat could be unsuitable and unfit for laying eggs, providing them with cover until they hatch, and allowing juvenile sturgeon to grow safely. Another problem with Atlantic sturgeon migrating to cooler waters permanently is that it would impact the food chain. Other animals and aquatic life will be affected by the lack of Atlantic sturgeon. Remember, every part of the food chain plays a valuable role. One missing link could drastically change the ecosystem.

Changes in the Earth's climate have always happened, but usually the change is much slower, leaving time for life on earth to adjust and adapt gradually. Currently, global warming is causing much more drastic and rapid changes in our climate, which will continue to happen if we do not figure out a way to stop it.



## Climate Change Rap

Your group or pair is responsible for creating an original rap or song to demonstrate your knowledge of climate change, global warming, how it is affecting Atlantic sturgeon, and what people can do to help.

When you are done creating your rap or song, you should practice it. Your group **MUST** present your rap or song to the class, as it will be used for part of your grade. As well as creating the rap, and presenting it, a neat, organized, edited, written set of lyrics must be turned in.

You may rap or sing your climate change song to other familiar songs or raps. For example, one group could create lyrics to go along with “The Star Spangled Banner” or “Frosty the Snowman.”

Use the rubric below to help you focus while creating and practicing your original rap. Good luck, have fun, and follow directions!

### Climate Change Rap Rubric

Area	Objectives	Possible Points
Cooperative Learning	Students work together cooperatively. All students participate while working on all aspects of the “rap” assignment.	25 pts
Written Lyrics	Written lyrics are organized, and written neatly. Final copy has been edited and revised, with no grammatical or spelling mistakes.	25 pts
Presentation	Entire group participates in some way during the rap presentation. The rap is performed musically, not simply read out loud. Volume is good and rate sung or “rapped” is appropriate.	20 pts
Accuracy	Rap includes accurate information that demonstrates knowledge of climate change, global warming, how it is affecting Atlantic sturgeon, and what people can do to help.	30 pts